

Kenilworth Club
410 Kenilworth Avenue
Kenilworth
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1090

HABS
ILL,
16-KENIL,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
801 - 19th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

KENILWORTH CLUB

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ILL,
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1-

Location: 410 Kenilworth Avenue, Kenilworth, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: The Kenilworth Club (Thomas R. Coyne, president, and others).

Present Use: Meeting place for various public functions of the village of Kenilworth.

Statement of Significance: The Kenilworth Club is a small club house of domestic scale and form, a building by George Washington Maher which is a good example of his motif rhythm theory at its most mature phase.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 of block 3 of the original town of Kenilworth, 28-42-13.

The following is based on the chain of title found in Book 7-9 in the Chicago Title and Trust Company and from the book Kenilworth: First Fifty Years: The property on which the club was erected was originally part of one of several farms. These farms were bought up by Charles E. Simmons during the period 1841 to 1888. On November 1, 1889, Joseph Sears purchased from Simmons 208.6 acres of this farmland and proceeded to develop this land into the village of Kenilworth. This land was then sold to the Kenilworth Company, Sears's company. Various individuals bought all or parts of the various lots, though Sears kept several himself. The exact names and dates of the transactions are in the tract book mentioned previously. The entire complex story is told succinctly in Kenilworth: First Fifty Years: In 1899 the North Shore Railroad franchise was granted, prompting the Kenilworth Co. to locate several stores along Kenilworth Ave., the main street of the village and adjacent to the railroad station. When this intention became known, George W. Maher and others who felt as he did, protested, urging that this particular area be made into a park entrance to the village. Consequently, Sears placed the stores 200 feet to the north of the disputed corner, and in 1900 deeded to the village the north and south corner lots of Kenilworth and Richmond Avenues (Document 2941217),

to have erected on them the circular stone benches and urns about the fountain at the intersection, all designed by Maher. The Kenilworth Park Board began in 1906 to obtain the land for Maher's park entrance. First the board purchased the northwest corner lot at Cummor and Kenilworth Avenues, and then the neighboring lot running to Richmond Avenue. At the same time, the board took a five-year option on the opposite lot across Kenilworth Avenue. The corners of the last two lots had already been deeded to the city by Sears in 1900. The remaining parcel, consisting of a lot and one half on Cummor and Kenilworth Avenues was purchased from Joseph Sears for the site of the village Assembly Hall (Documents 3970344 and 4369976). The last remaining lots laying along the railroad tracks were purchased in 1909 and 1917 from the Sears estate. (For more detailed information see C. T. & T. tract book 7-9, Documents 1351235 through 14770018.)

2. Date of erection: Designed 1904 (?) and built 1906-07.
3. Architect: George Washington Maher (1864-1926).
4. Original plan and construction: According to Miss Wyld, Maher used the poppy as his basic design motif here, as he also did in the Magerstadt House of 1906. Maher's wife, Elizabeth Brooks Maher, was an accomplished painter who made flower motif studies in oil and water color. Many of these provided Maher with floral motifs for his designs. The chosen floral type, in this case the poppy, would be used as the decorative element throughout the building, in an effort to unify the composition and provide integration. Other examples of the application of this "motif rhythm theory" were the Farson House, Oak Park, 1899 (honeysuckle); Patten House, Evanston, 1902 (thistle); Magerstadt House, Chicago, 1906 (poppy).

The original plan of the building, as shown in the Inland Architect, October, 1907, was similar, having a narrow hall, rest rooms half inside the building and a shorter kitchen. These conditions resulted in a smaller projection to the rear and a large void at the entrance which was covered with a trellis.

5. Alterations and additions: (with dates and architects) According to Philip Maher, son of the original architect and who entered into partnership with his father, when he was about 16-18 years of age, the Kenilworth Club was re-modeled. At this time, the hallway was enlarged to its present size, the kitchen elongated, and a new pair of rest rooms constructed to the south. The pergola at the entrance was removed and the entry way enclosed, with glazed

doors matching the polychrome glazing elsewhere in the building. These changes are consequently not readily apparent from the exterior.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

George Washington Maher (1864-1926) was the first Prairie School architect of residences to follow contemporary European developments and to show an influence of his study in his own work. In 1898 Maher made the second of two trips to Europe where he became aware of the Art Nouveau and Secession movements. The following year, 1899, Maher's MacMean House was published in Decorative Kunst, vol. IV, 1899, p. 110, an Austrian avant garde periodical. Miss Wyld recollects that the Kenilworth Club was also published abroad. These two instances of publication show that Maher was one of the first of the residential architects of the Prairie School to be recognized and published in Europe.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and Unpublished:

Brooks, H. Allen. The Prairie School. Chicago, Illinois: Microfilm of unpublished dissertation, Burnham Library, Art Institute, 1957.

Interviews: Miss Violet Wyld (niece of George W. Maher) July 8 and 15, 1967, 424 Warrick, Kenilworth, Illinois.
Philip Maher (son of George W. Maher), Architect, July 15, 1967, 75 E. Wacker Drive (office), Chicago, Illinois.

Rudd, J. William. George W. Maher - Architect. Chicago: Microfilm of unpublished dissertation, Burnham Library, Art Institute, 1964.

Photograph of poppy study, courtesy of Miss Violet Wyld, niece of George W. Maher. His European sketches are also in her possession.

2. Published:

Architectural Record (June 1907). p. 435.

Condit, Carl W. The Chicago School of Architecture. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964. pp. 195-6, fig. 156.

Inland Architect and News Record. Vol. L, No. 4 (October 1907).
Most complete domestic publication of the Kenilworth Club, containing two interior and two exterior photos, plan and description.

Kenilworth: First Fifty Years. Kenilworth: Village of
Kenilworth, 1947.

Peisch, Mark L. The Chicago School of Architecture. New
York: Random House, 1964.

Western Architect (March 1914). p. 25.

Western Architect (November 1926). p. 140.
Obituary.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Kenilworth Historical Society.

E. Supplemental Information:

"Village Hall, Kenilworth, Illinois., George W. Maher, architect, Chicago. The Kenilworth Assembly Hall represents an evolution of the old New England village meeting house. The plan contemplates under one roof the housing of all civic requirements of a small village, as well as providing for its educational and its amusement features. The arrangement consists of a large assembly hall, with a stage at the end to be used for theatricals, amusements and lectures. The library room provides for the caring of books, also a meeting place for the village trustees. The Kenilworth Club meets in this library room. Adjoining this room is an up-to-date kitchen, provided with all modern arrangements for culinary purposes. The building in design is low, with strong horizontal lines predominating. This effect is intended to assist in broadening the general landscape treatment and park adjacent. The trees around about rise above the roof of the building, thus creating a naturalistic effect of exterior so necessary in park work. The elm tree at the main entrance rising from amidst the pergola forms the motif of decorative design. Here is the symbol of growth and in the design this is typified throughout by means of a geometric form rising organically from a base and capped at the top. This motif form appears throughout in the exterior and interior design, varying in ornateness according to materials employed. The color scheme of the building consists of a soft gray green, wood browns and a deep blue. These three colors are placed in harmonious relations and assist in adding value to the design. Two exterior and two interior views are illustrated." Inland Architect and News Record, Vol. L, No. 4 (October 1907), p. 48./

Prepared by Leland M. Roth
Historian
National Park Service
Summer 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An example of the principles of Prairie School architecture applied to the design of a small community building.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions, layout-shape: Principal portion is roughly rectangular, approximately 40'-0" x 137'-0", with a 3' wing projecting to the south.
2. Foundations: Brick. The upper two courses are of hard-surface brick set to provide a water table, and painted dark brown. The lower courses are of a soft brick plastered over. The plaster is unpainted.
3. Wall construction: The walls appear to be of wood frame construction. Their exterior surface is a smooth-finished stucco divided into panels by decorative wood trim, the face of which is about an inch and one-half out from the face of the stucco. At the bottom six inches of the wall the stucco face curves outward in a concave curve to the face of the trim. The verticals of the trim are paired around a wall-height decorative motif that suggests a flower constructed of the same heavy material as the trim. The same flower motif repeats in different materials and in varying, but always smaller, sizes elsewhere throughout the building. The stucco walls are painted off-white, and the wood trim dark brown.
4. Structural system, framing: The wooden beams that frame the surface of the hipped roofs are placed at approximately 78'-7" on centers, and are visible from the rooms below. High collar-beams tie these beams across. Every third beam in the auditorium forms the upper chord of a fan truss whose tension members are made up of steel rods. The central portion of the lower chord is slightly raised. These trusses were not part of the original building (see "Interior Views, Village Hall, Kenilworth, Ill.," Inland Architect and News Record, Oct. 1907), nor was the fire protection sprinkler system.
5. Porches: The entry at the northern side of the foyer appears to have been built after the original completion of the building. The tree which now grows through the foyer roof would have been outside the original building.

The southern porch provides a convenient drive-up entrance, and it too appears to be either a later addition or an enclosure of an original open porch.

6. Chimney: Brick:

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The principal entrance doors are of wood stile and rail construction. The north doors are glazed in patterns of clear and various kinds of obscure glass notably replacing leaded glass.
- b. Windows: The windows are wood casements glazed in the same design. In each window or door the design includes three stylized flowers. The petals of the blossoms are formed in green or yellowish glass and were set in a square frame tilted on one angle. The taper of the stem is emphasized. According to Miss Violet Wyld, niece of the architect, the motif is a stylized oriental poppy. [Conversation between the writer and Miss Wyld on July 5, 1967.]

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Principal roofs are hipped and shingled now with composition shingles. Flat roofs cover the entry, a corner of the kitchen, and the south wing.
- b. Eaves: These are enclosed with a level soffit of tongued-and-grooved boards.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plan: The foyer is located between the auditorium and the lounge. A bank of folding wooden doors opens the full width of one side of the foyer to the auditorium and another bank of folding doors similarly opens the opposite side of the foyer to the lounge thus allowing these spaces to be used either jointly or separately. A flexible open plan has been thereby achieved.

The auditorium is lined with built-in benches. The proscenium of the raised stage fits naturally into the sloping ceiling of the auditorium.

The lounge originally was a library with book cabinets lining portions of its walls. The brick fireplace is painted now, but probably not originally.

The men's and women's lounge and toilets have been recently remodeled.

2. Flooring: Oak.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Wainscot and chair rail are wood. Wall finish is plaster. Lounge and stage have exposed roof beams and wooden roof deck. Walls, wainscot and wall trim are now painted cream, but originally the woodwork was probably stained as it still is behind stage. The exposed roof structure is painted dark brown as are the modern acoustical panels recessed between the auditorium roof beams. In the foyer a light-colored acoustical ceiling has been installed in a flush plane.
4. Doorways and doors: The original doors are wood and double paneled--two tall panels separated by a narrow vertical molding. Door opening trim is of flat pieces of wood of rectangular cross section.
5. Decorative features and trim: Nine-foot high stylized poppies in wood flank the proscenium and, at more nearly life size, the motif is incorporated into the design of the built-in benches along the auditorium walls. In the lounge, cast iron andirons also display the poppy motif.
6. Lighting, type of fixtures: Electric. A pair of lanterns stand outside of the northern entrance, and a small pair at the southern entrance. Again the poppy motif is followed in the leaded glass of the lanterns. The original interior fixtures have been replaced with ones not in character with the building. See "Interior Views, Village Hall, Kenilworth, Ill.," Inland Architect and News Record, Oct. 1907, for original fixtures.
7. Heating and ventilating: Hot water. Two exhaust fans at ridge of auditorium roof ventilate the building. A sprinkler fire protection system has been installed throughout the building.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: The Kenilworth Avenue side of the building faces northwest, but for simplicity this side has been called the north side; similarly the southeast has been called south.

To the west a public park adjoins the building, a fountain graces the street a slight distance away, and a station for the commuter train to Chicago is nearby. The immediately surrounding buildings are large, single family homes.

2. Landscaping and walks: The building stands free on a large, tree-covered site. A driveway allows automobiles to approach the south entrance. The shrubbery around the building is quite conventional and clipped.

Prepared by Wesley Shank
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
July 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The records of this structure were made during the 1967 Chicago IV Project. This was the fourth in a series of summer projects designed to record the significant architecture of the Chicago area. The project was sponsored by the late Mr. Earl J. Reed, FAIA. He was assisted by John R. Fugard, FAIA, Treasurer, and Miss Agnes E. Hodges of the Chicago Chapter Foundation, and a Selection Committee consisting of James Arkin, AIA; Ruth Schoneman, Art Institute of Chicago; and J. Carson Webster, Northwestern University. Organizations cooperating with HABS in this project were: The Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects; the Chicago Chapter Foundation; the Chicago Community Trust; the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies; the Illinois Arts Council; and the Chicago Heritage Committee. The Council also made funds available for a Statewide Inventory Project with out-of-Chicago architects cooperating. Quarters were provided at Glessner House through the Chicago School of Architecture Foundation.

Mr. James C. Massey, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey, was in over-all charge of HABS summer programs. The Project Supervisor was Wesley Shank, Iowa State University. Other members of the summer team were: Historian, Leland Roth, University of Illinois, Urbana; Photographer, Philip Turner; Secretary, Mrs. Burt Schloss; and Student Assistant Architects: Keleal Nassin, Tulane University; Maurice Griffin, Illinois Institute of Technology; Allan Steenhusen and David Vyverberg, Iowa State University.